Jim Henson's™
THE STORYTELLER™
Tale Four of Four
Tricksters
ARCHAIA
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A.L. KAPLAN

LOKI *the* MATCHMAKER

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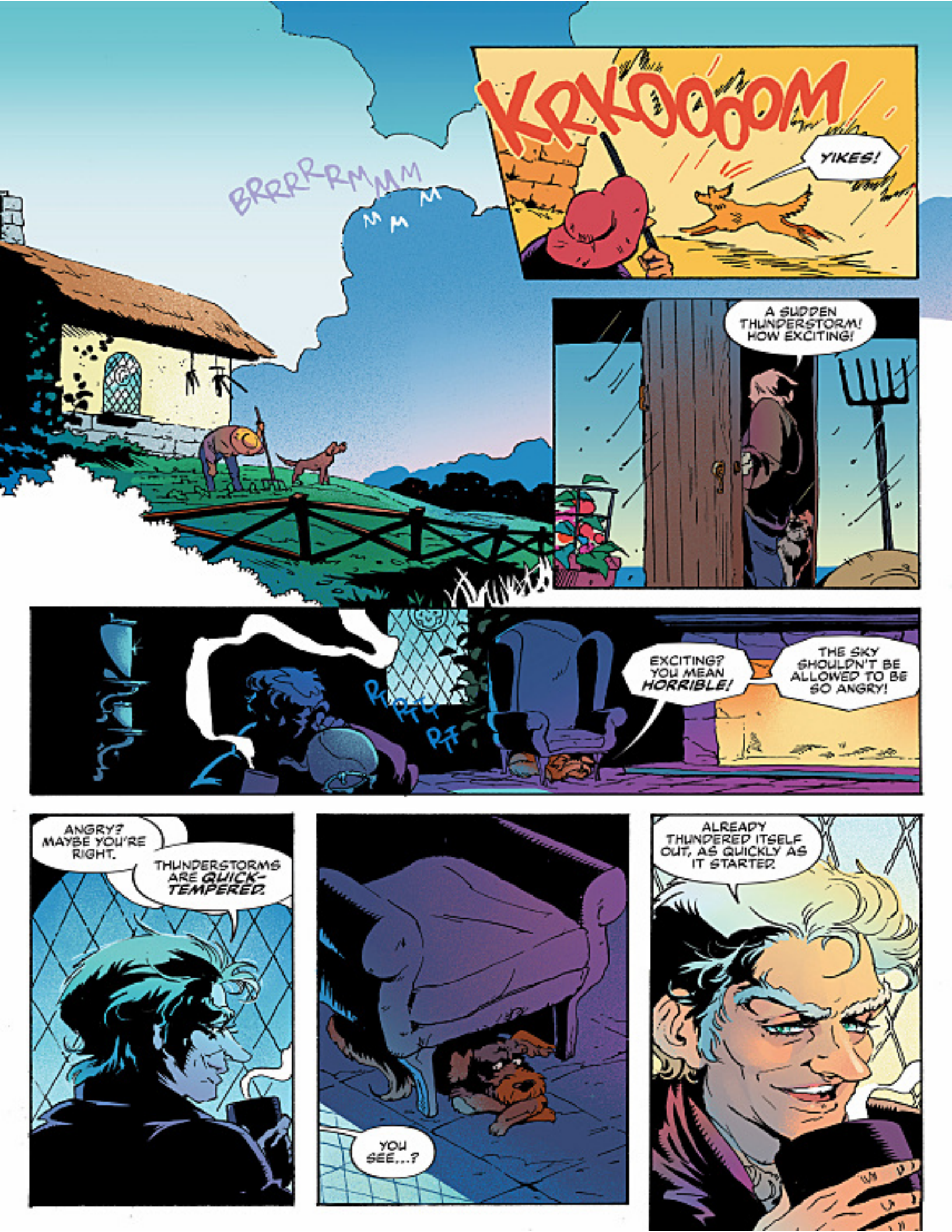
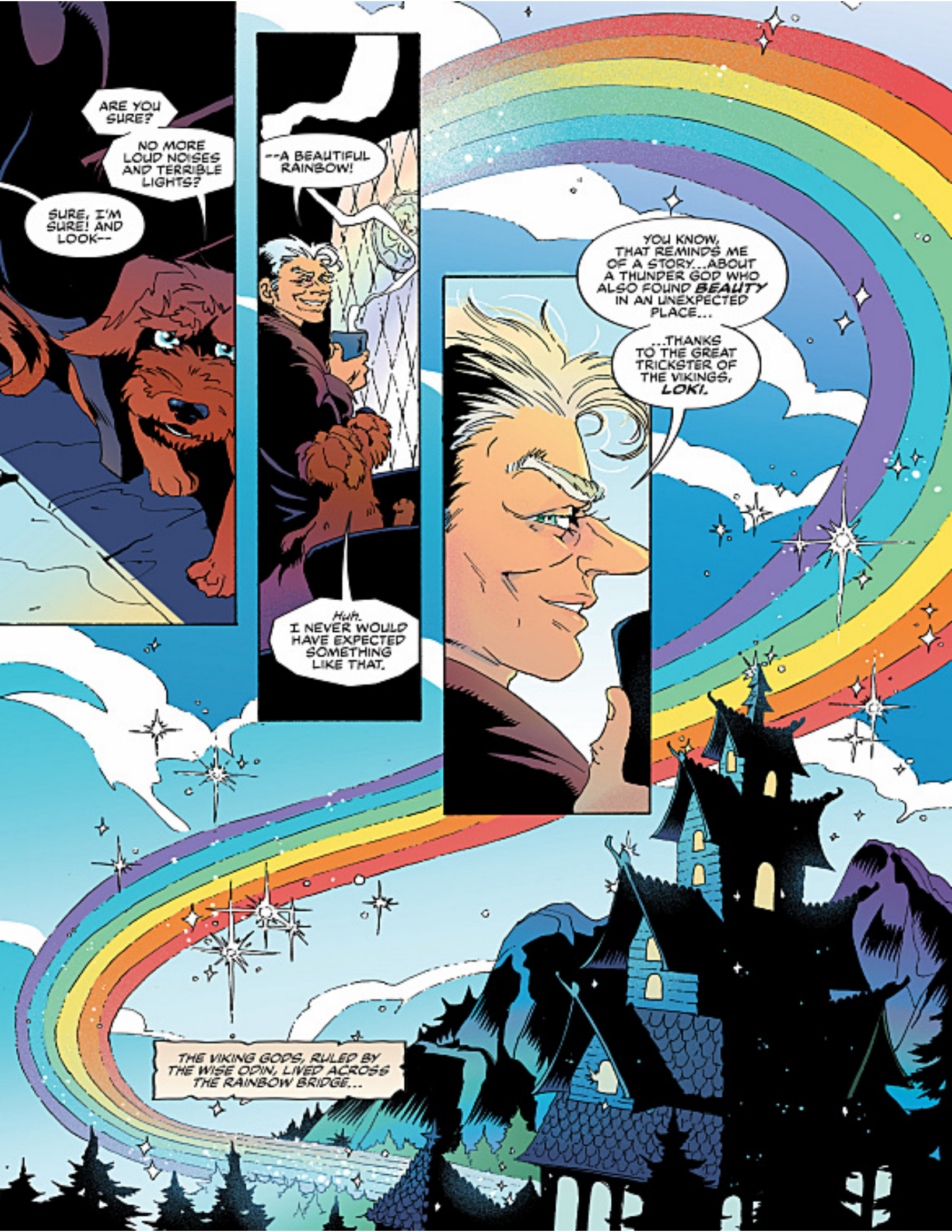
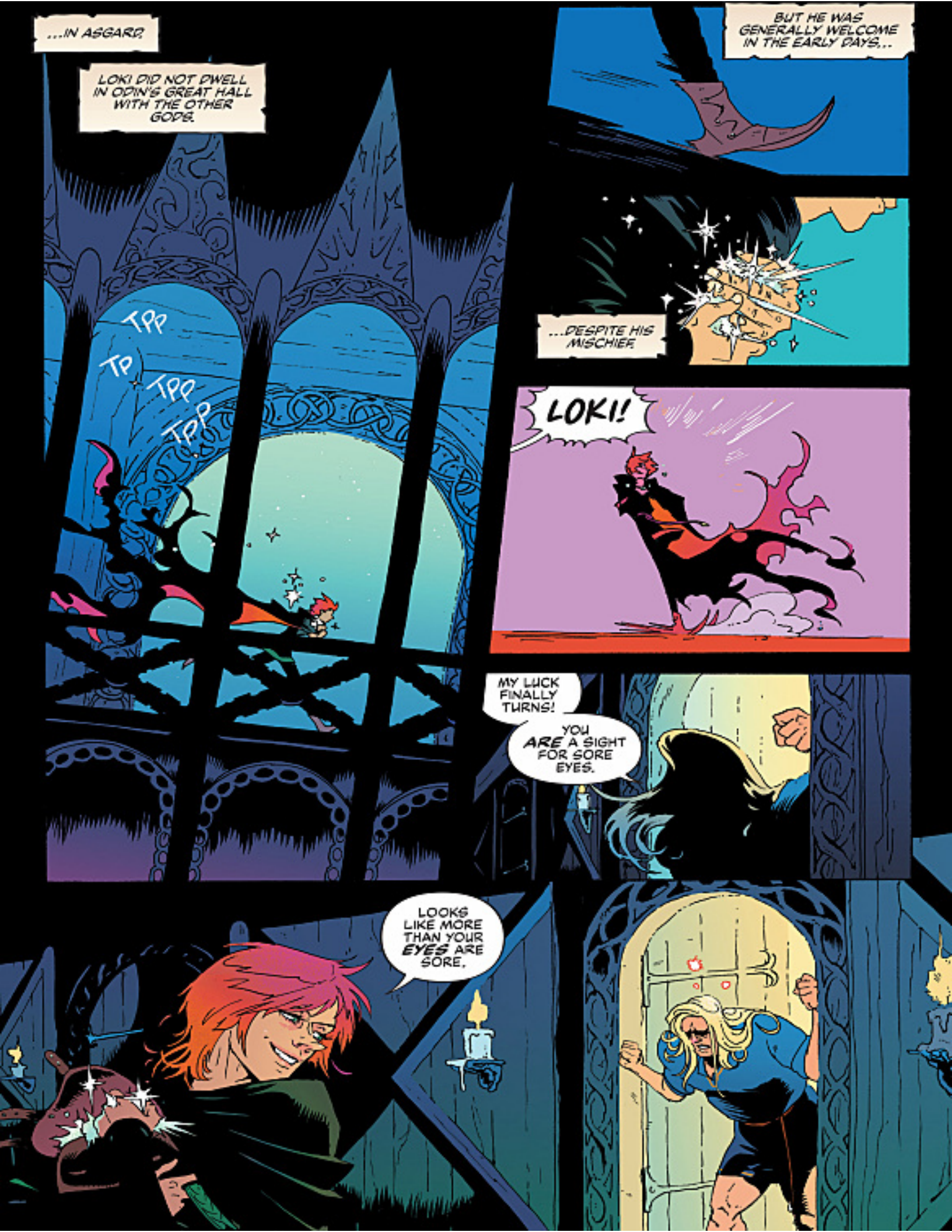
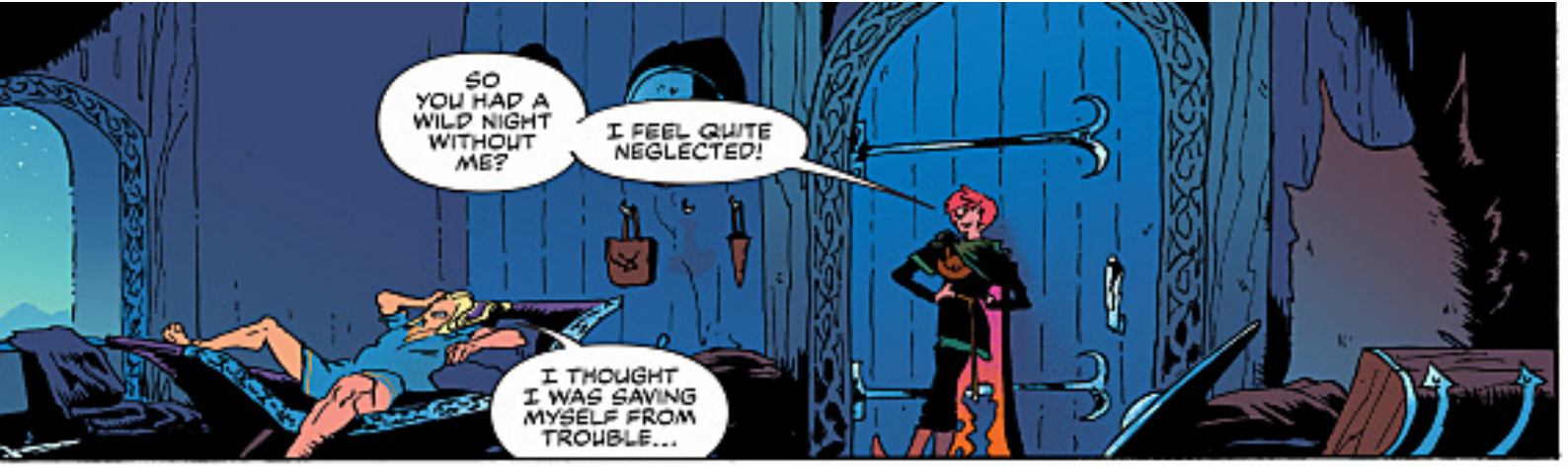

BRRRRRMMMM
KRKOOOOM
YIKES!
A SUDDEN THUNDERSTORM! HOW EXCITING!
EXCITING? YOU MEAN HORRIBLE!
THE SKY SHOULDN'T BE ALLOWED TO BE SO ANGRY!
ANGRY? MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT.
THUNDERSTORMS ARE QUICK-TEMPERED.
YOU SEE...?
ALREADY THUNDERED ITSELF OUT, AS QUICKLY AS IT STARTED.


ARE YOU SURE?
NO MORE LOUD NOISES AND TERRIBLE LIGHTS?
SURE, I'M SURE! AND LOOK--
--A BEAUTIFUL RAINBOW!
Huh. I NEVER WOULD HAVE EXPECTED SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
YOU KNOW, THAT REMINDS ME OF A STORY...ABOUT A THUNDER GOD WHO ALSO FOUND BEAUTY IN AN UNEXPECTED PLACE...
...THANKS TO THE GREAT TRICKSTER OF THE VIKINGS, LOKI.
THE VIKING GODS, RULED BY THE WISE ODIN, LIVED ACROSS THE RAINBOW BRIDGE...

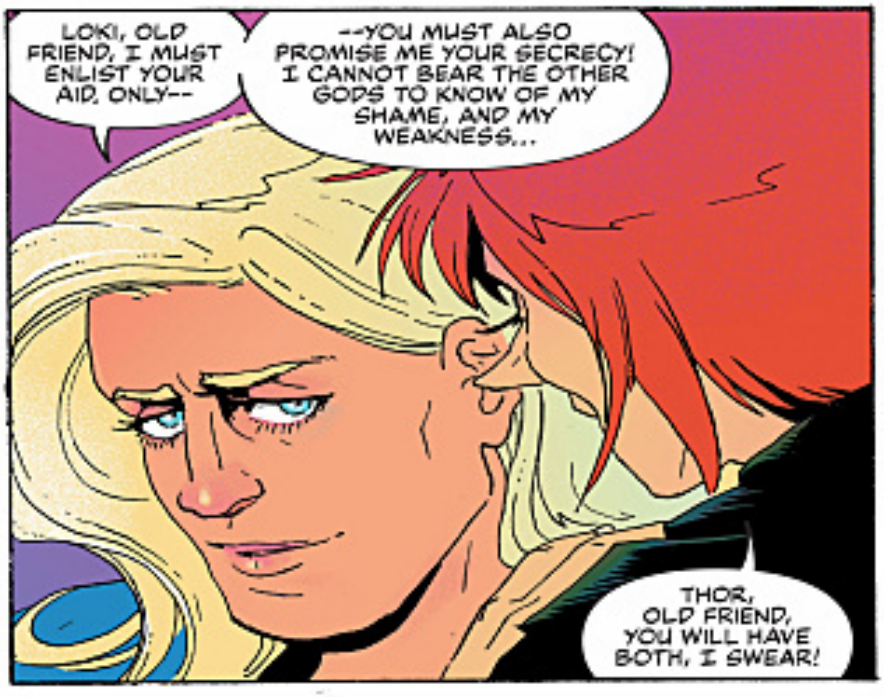

...IN ASGARD
LOKI DID NOT DWELL IN ODIN'S GREAT HALL WITH THE OTHER GODS.
TPP
TP
TPP
TPP
BUT HE WAS GENERALLY WELCOME IN THE EARLY DAYS...
...DESPITE HIS MISCHIEF
LOKI!
MY LUCK FINALLY TURNS!
YOU ARE A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES.
LOOKS LIKE MORE THAN YOUR EYES ARE SORE.


SO YOU HAD A WILD NIGHT WITHOUT ME?
I FEEL QUITE NEGLECTED!
I THOUGHT I WAS SAVING MYSELF FROM TROUBLE...

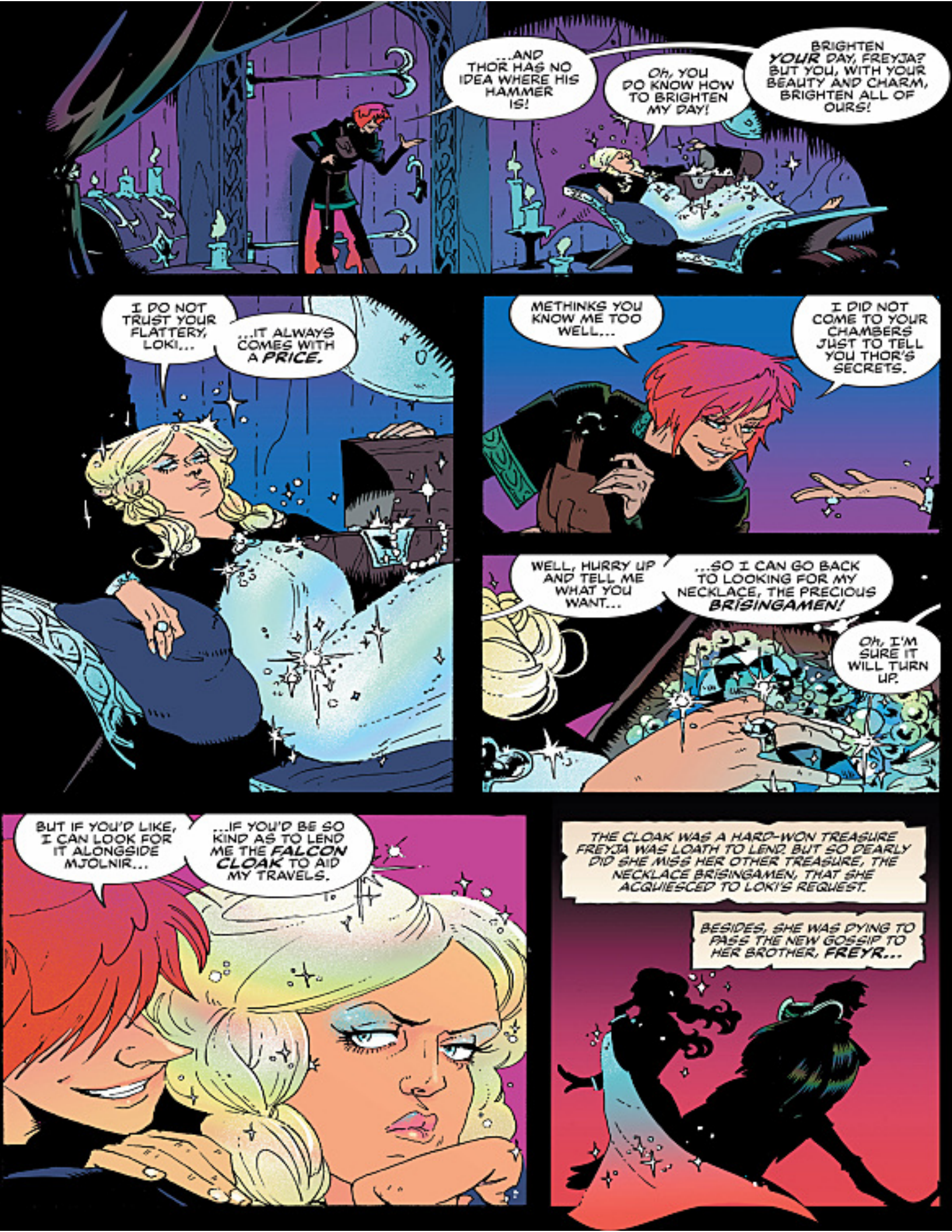
...BUT ALAS! IT WOULD SEEM I FIND TROUBLE WITHOUT YOU, AS WELL, AND I CANNOT EVEN REMEMBER THE DETAILS OF MY EXPLOITS...
HOW DISAPPOINTING.

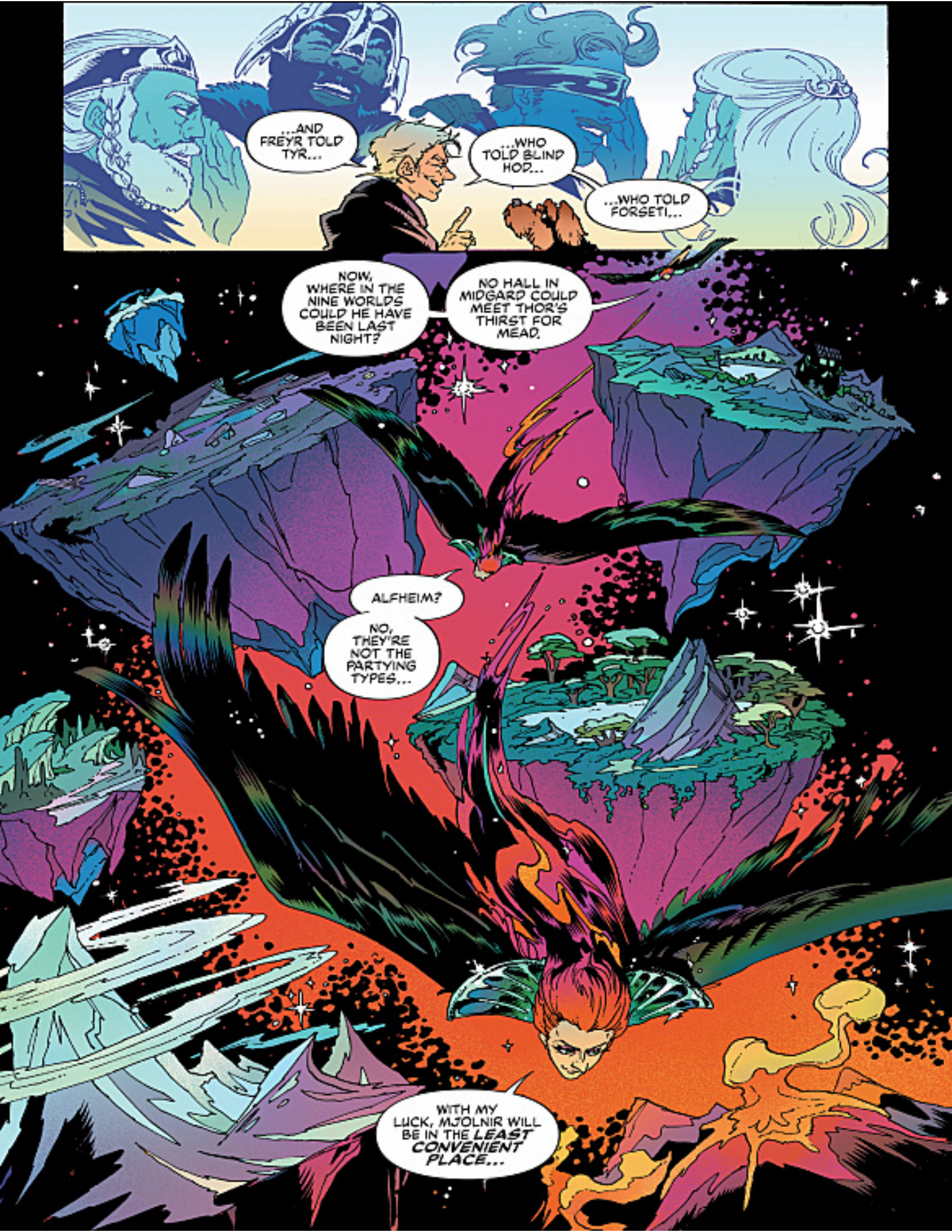
...I KNOW ONLY THE DIRE PREDICAMENT THAT I HAVE AWAKENED INTO!

Oh?

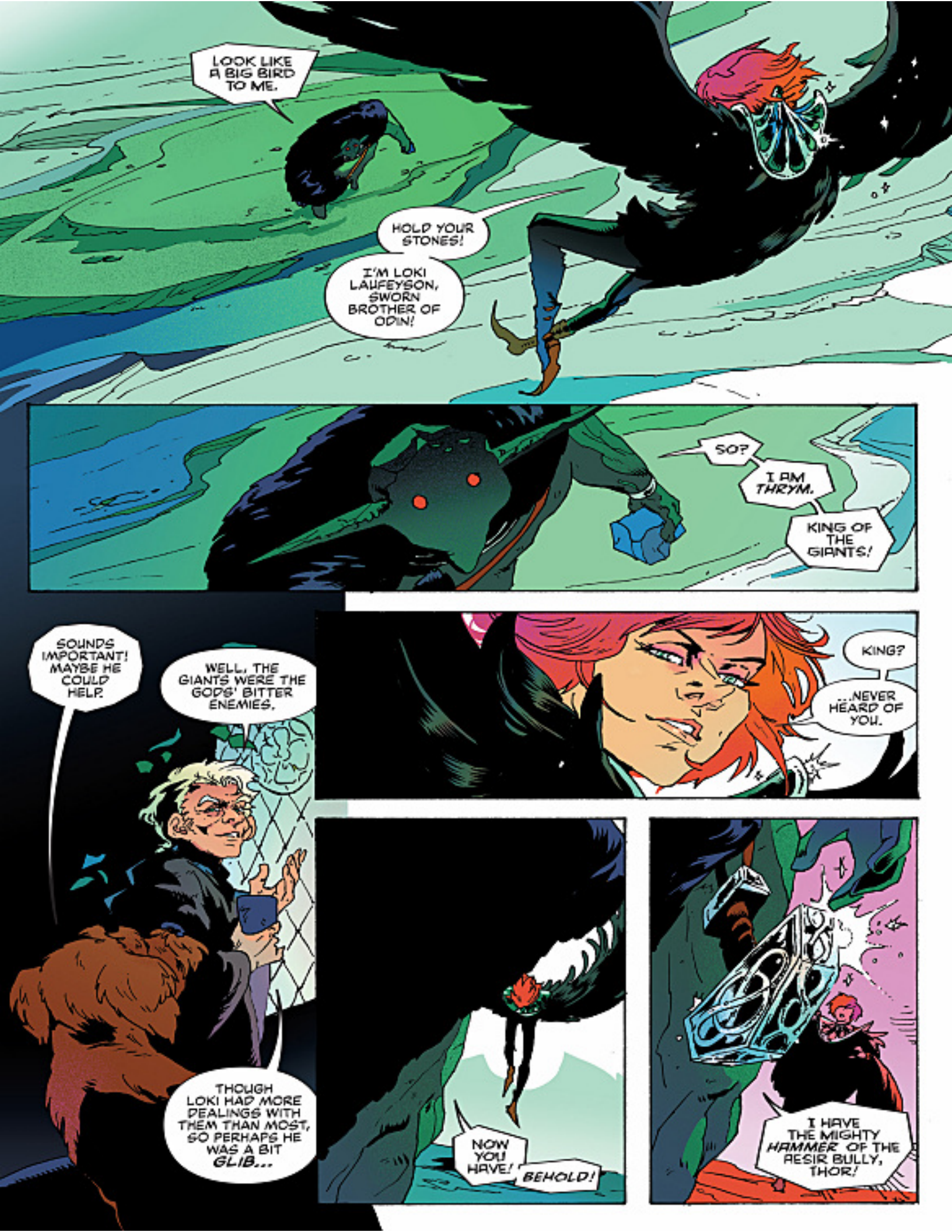

LOKI, OLD FRIEND, I MUST ENLIST YOUR AID, ONLY--
--YOU MUST ALSO PROMISE ME YOUR SECRECY! I CANNOT BEAR THE OTHER GODS TO KNOW OF MY SHAME, AND MY WEAKNESS...
THOR, OLD FRIEND, YOU WILL HAVE BOTH, I SWEAR!

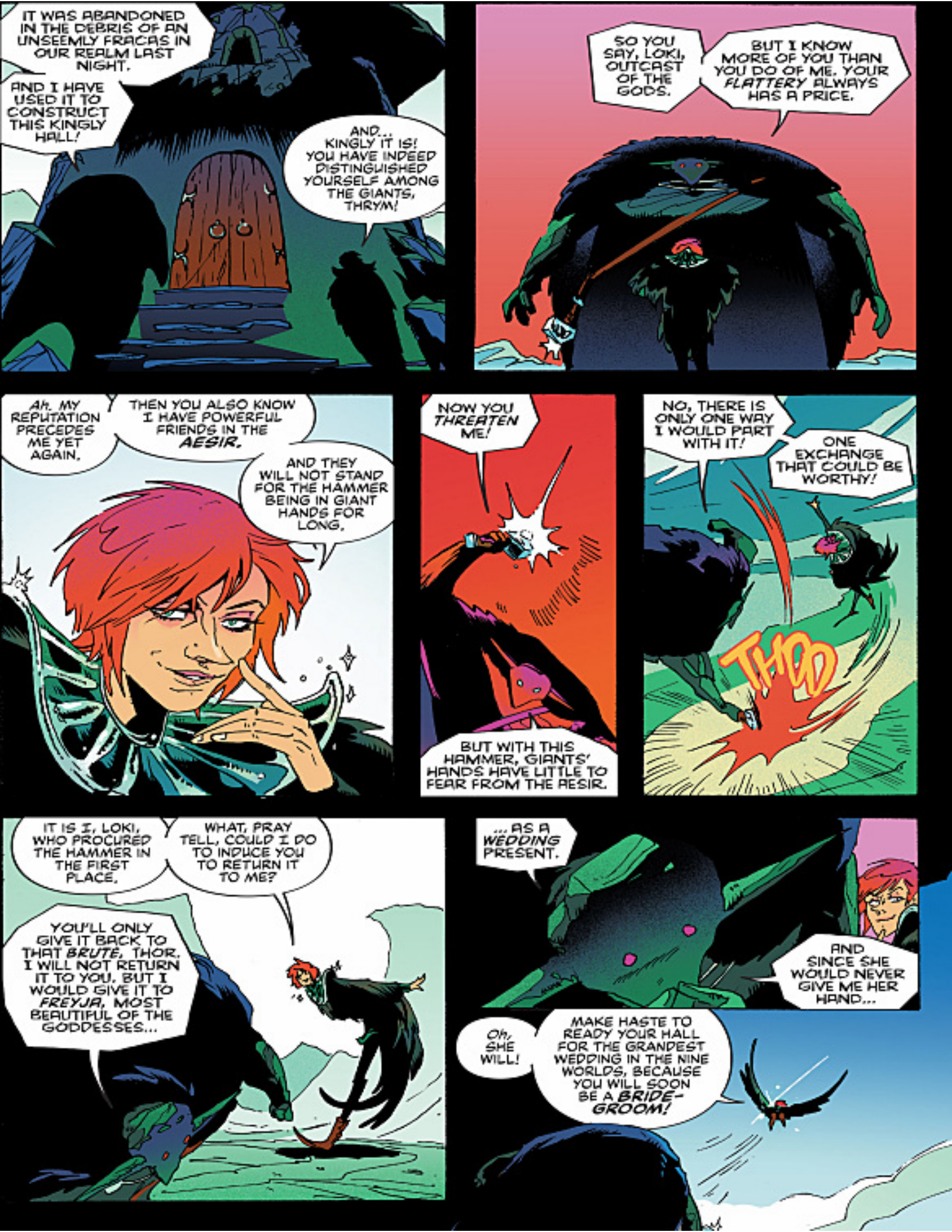
THE THUNDER GOD RELATED HIS MISERY TO LOKI, WHO KNEW JUST WHAT TO DO...

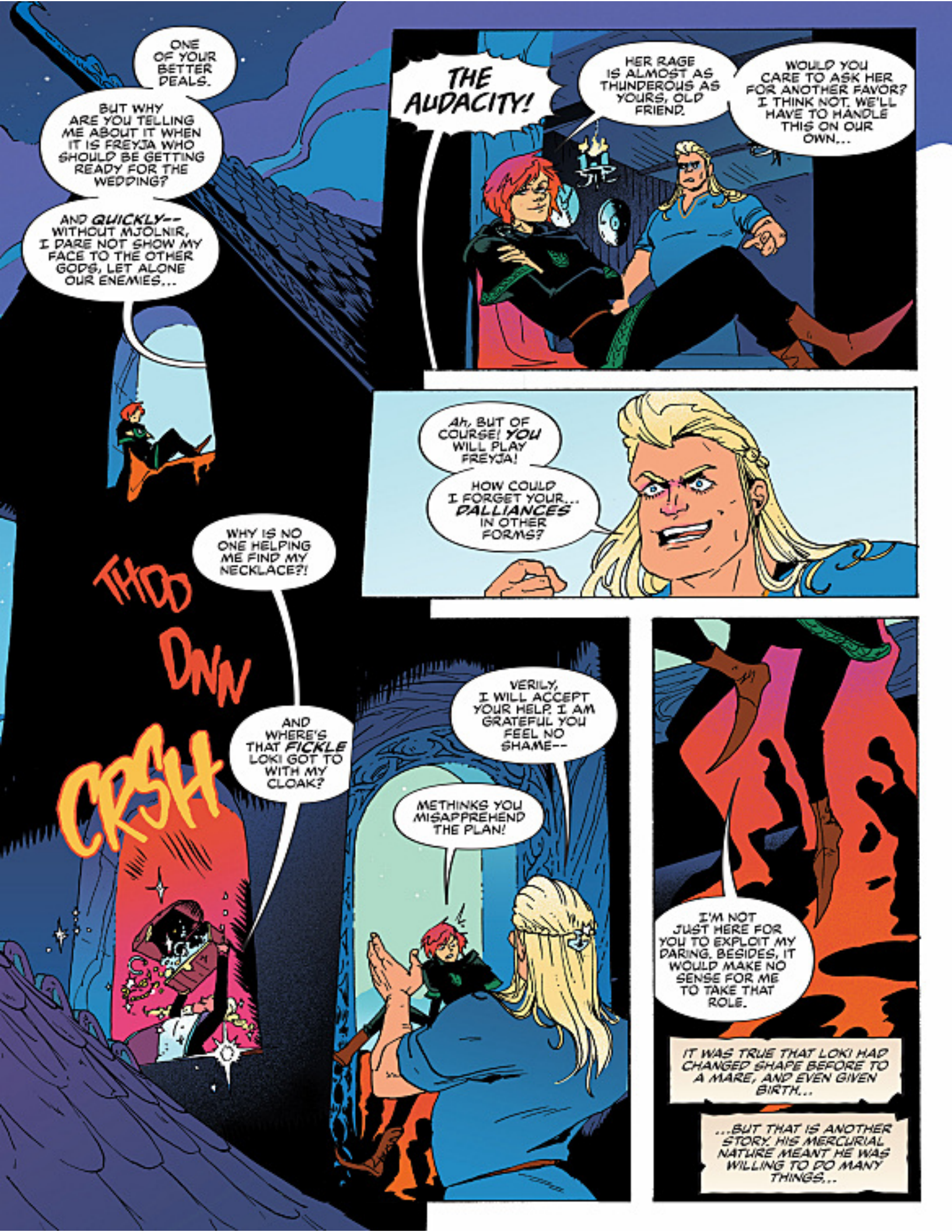

...AND THOR HAS NO IDEA WHERE HIS HAMMER IS!
OH, YOU DO KNOW HOW TO BRIGHTEN MY DAY!
BRIGHTEN *YOUR* DAY, FREYJA? BUT YOU, WITH YOUR BEAUTY AND CHARM, BRIGHTEN ALL OF OURS!
I DO NOT TRUST YOUR FLATTERY, LOKI...
...IT ALWAYS COMES WITH A *PRICE.*
METHINKS YOU KNOW ME TOO WELL...
I DID NOT COME TO YOUR CHAMBERS JUST TO TELL YOU THOR'S SECRETS.
WELL, HURRY UP AND TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT...
...SO I CAN GO BACK TO LOOKING FOR MY NECKLACE, THE PRECIOUS *BRISINGAMEN!*
OH, I'M SURE IT WILL TURN UP.
BUT IF YOU'D LIKE, I CAN LOOK FOR IT ALONGSIDE MJOLNIR...
...IF YOU'D BE SO KIND AS TO LEND ME THE *FALCON CLOAK* TO AID MY TRAVELS.
THE CLOAK WAS A HARD-WON TREASURE FREYJA WAS LOATH TO LEND. BUT SO DEARLY DID SHE MISS HER OTHER TREASURE, THE NECKLACE BRISINGAMEN, THAT SHE ACQUIESCED TO LOKI'S REQUEST.
BESIDES, SHE WAS DYING TO PASS THE NEW GOSSIP TO HER BROTHER, **FREYR**...

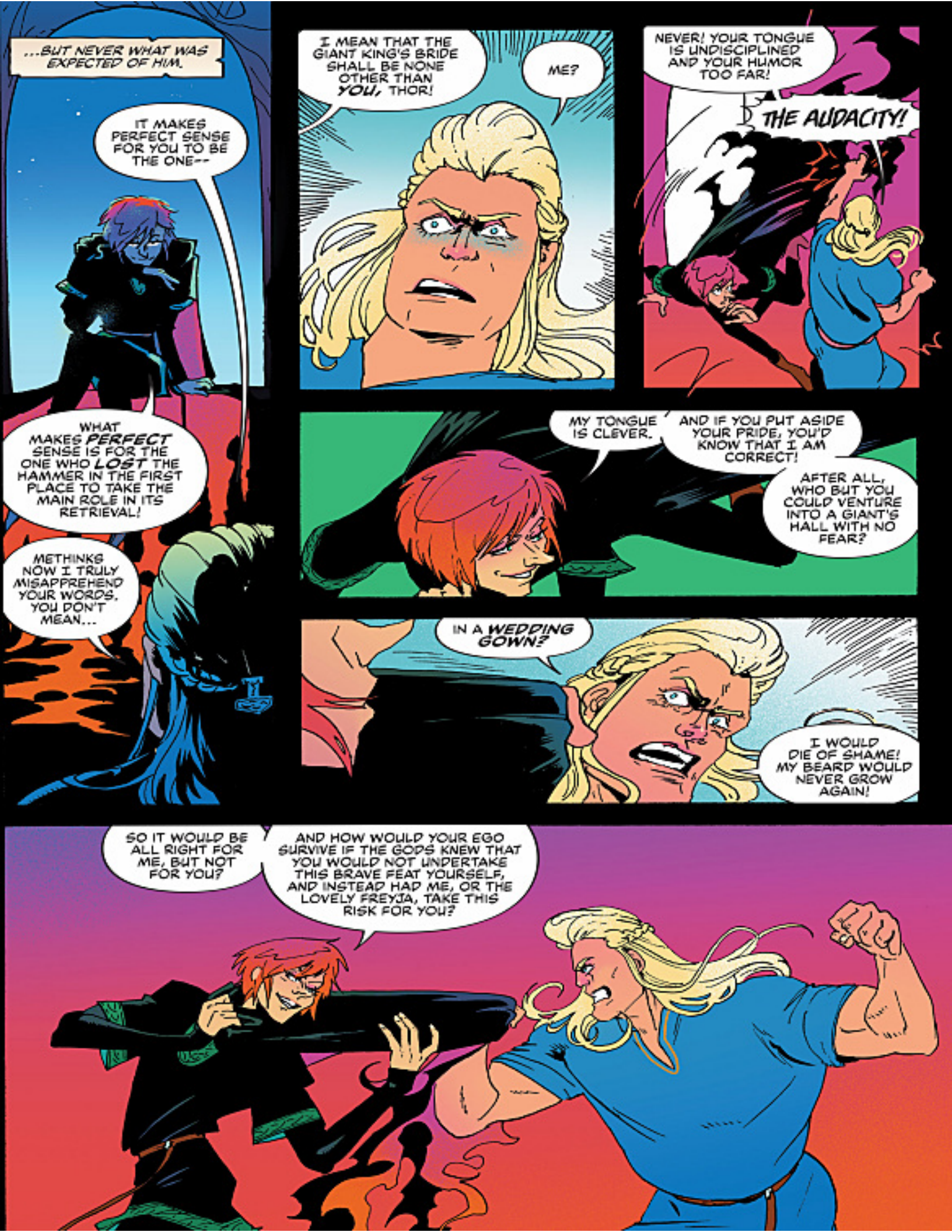

...AND FREYR TOLD TYR...
...WHO TOLD BLIND HOD...
...WHO TOLD FORSETI...
NOW, WHERE IN THE NINE WORLDS COULD HE HAVE BEEN LAST NIGHT?
NO HALL IN MIDGARD COULD MEET THOR'S THIRST FOR MEAD.
ALFHEIM?
NO, THEY'RE NOT THE PARTYING TYPES...
WITH MY LUCK, MJOLNIR WILL BE IN THE *LEAST CONVENIENT PLACE...*

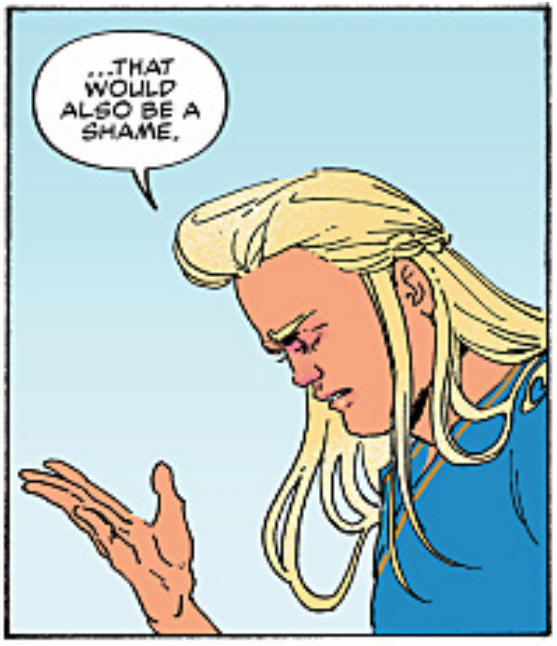
LOKI PASSED OVER THE LEAST CONVENIENT PLACE--JOTUNHEIM, THE LAND OF THE GIANTS...
A GREAT HALL?
MAYBE NOT SO GREAT...
TWWK
HEY!
I'M NO BIRD, YOU KNOW!


LOOK LIKE A BIG BIRD TO ME.
HOLD YOUR STONES!
I'M LOKI LAUFEYSON, SWORN BROTHER OF ODIN!
SO?
I AM THRYM.
KING OF THE GIANTS!
KING?
...NEVER HEARD OF YOU.
SOUNDS IMPORTANT! MAYBE HE COULD HELP.
WELL, THE GIANTS WERE THE GODS' BITTER ENEMIES.
THOUGH LOKI HAD MORE DEALINGS WITH THEM THAN MOST, SO PERHAPS HE WAS A BIT GLIB...
NOW YOU HAVE!
BEHOLD!
I HAVE THE MIGHTY HAMMER OF THE AESIR BULLY, THOR!


IT WAS ABANDONED IN THE DEBRIS OF AN UNSEEMLY FRACAS IN OUR REALM LAST NIGHT.
AND I HAVE USED IT TO CONSTRUCT THIS KINGLY HALL!
AND... KINGLY IT IS! YOU HAVE INDEED DISTINGUISHED YOURSELF AMONG THE GIANTS, THRYM!
SO YOU SAY, LOKI, OUTCAST OF THE GODS.
BUT I KNOW MORE OF YOU THAN YOU DO OF ME. YOUR FLATTERY ALWAYS HAS A PRICE.
AH. MY REPUTATION PRECEDES ME YET AGAIN.
THEN YOU ALSO KNOW I HAVE POWERFUL FRIENDS IN THE AESIR.
AND THEY WILL NOT STAND FOR THE HAMMER BEING IN GIANT HANDS FOR LONG.
NOW YOU THREATEN ME!
BUT WITH THIS HAMMER, GIANTS' HANDS HAVE LITTLE TO FEAR FROM THE AESIR.
NO, THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY I WOULD PART WITH IT!
ONE EXCHANGE THAT COULD BE WORTHY!
THUD
IT IS I, LOKI, WHO PROCURED THE HAMMER IN THE FIRST PLACE.
WHAT, PRAY TELL, COULD I DO TO INDUCE YOU TO RETURN IT TO ME?
YOU'LL ONLY GIVE IT BACK TO THAT BRUTE, THOR. I WILL NOT RETURN IT TO YOU, BUT I WOULD GIVE IT TO FREYJA, MOST BEAUTIFUL OF THE GODDESSES...
...AS A WEDDING PRESENT.
AND SINCE SHE WOULD NEVER GIVE ME HER HAND...
OH, SHE WILL!
MAKE HASTE TO READY YOUR HALL FOR THE GRANDEST WEDDING IN THE NINE WORLDS, BECAUSE YOU WILL SOON BE A BRIDE-GROOM!

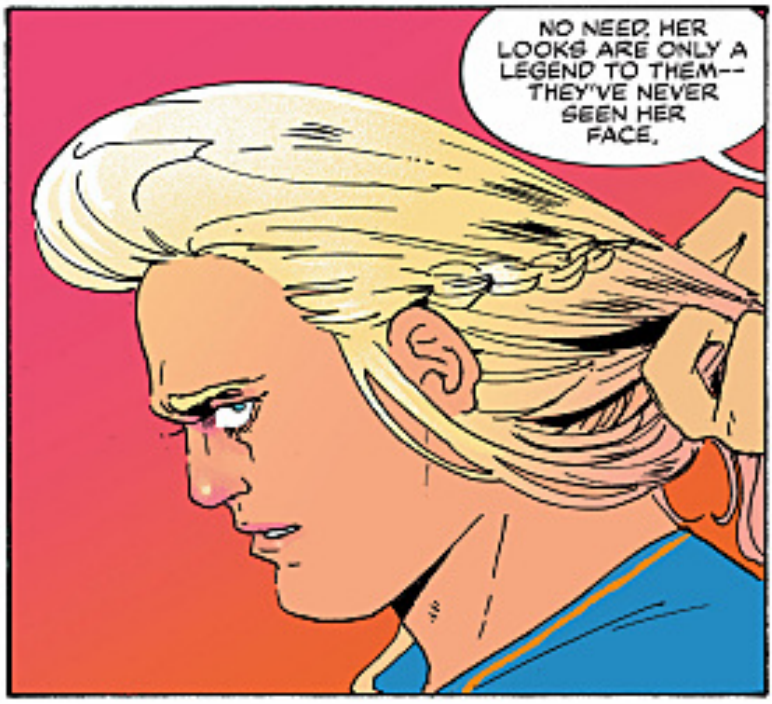

ONE OF YOUR BETTER DEALS.
BUT WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME ABOUT IT WHEN IT IS FREYJA WHO SHOULD BE GETTING READY FOR THE WEDDING?
AND QUICKLY-- WITHOUT MJOLNIR, I DARE NOT SHOW MY FACE TO THE OTHER GODS, LET ALONE OUR ENEMIES...
THE AUDACITY!
HER RAGE IS ALMOST AS THUNDEROUS AS YOURS, OLD FRIEND.
WOULD YOU CARE TO ASK HER FOR ANOTHER FAVOR? I THINK NOT. WE'LL HAVE TO HANDLE THIS ON OUR OWN...
Ah, BUT OF COURSE! YOU WILL PLAY FREYJA!
HOW COULD I FORGET YOUR... DALLIANCES IN OTHER FORMS?
WHY IS NO ONE HELPING ME FIND MY NECKLACE?!
THOD DNN
CRSH
AND WHERE'S THAT FICKLE LOKI GOT TO WITH MY CLOAK?
VERILY, I WILL ACCEPT YOUR HELP. I AM GRATEFUL YOU FEEL NO SHAME--
METHINKS YOU MISAPPREHEND THE PLAN!
I'M NOT JUST HERE FOR YOU TO EXPLOIT MY DARING. BESIDES, IT WOULD MAKE NO SENSE FOR ME TO TAKE THAT ROLE.
IT WAS TRUE THAT LOKI HAD CHANGED SHAPE BEFORE TO A MARE, AND EVEN GIVEN BIRTH...
...BUT THAT IS ANOTHER STORY. HIS MERCURIAL NATURE MEANT HE WAS WILLING TO DO MANY THINGS...

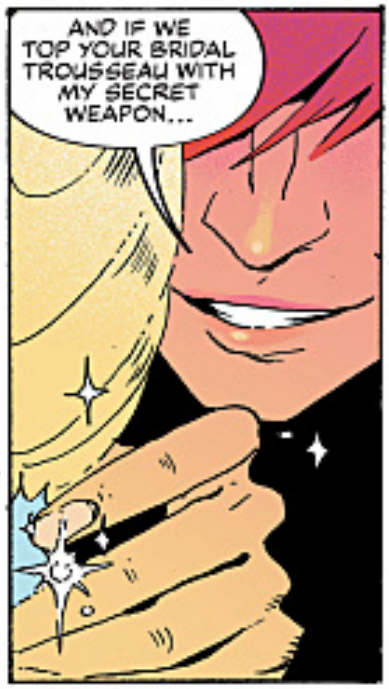

...BUT NEVER WHAT WAS EXPECTED OF HIM.
IT MAKES PERFECT SENSE FOR YOU TO BE THE ONE--
WHAT MAKES PERFECT SENSE IS FOR THE ONE WHO LOST THE HAMMER IN THE FIRST PLACE TO TAKE THE MAIN ROLE IN ITS RETRIEVAL!
METHINKS NOW I TRULY MISAPPREHEND YOUR WORDS. YOU DON'T MEAN...
I MEAN THAT THE GIANT KING'S BRIDE SHALL BE NONE OTHER THAN YOU, THOR!
ME?
NEVER! YOUR TONGUE IS UNDISCIPLINED AND YOUR HUMOR TOO FAR!
THE AUDACITY!
MY TONGUE IS CLEVER.
AND IF YOU PUT ASIDE YOUR PRIDE, YOU'D KNOW THAT I AM CORRECT!
AFTER ALL, WHO BUT YOU COULD VENTURE INTO A GIANT'S HALL WITH NO FEAR?
IN A WEDDING GOWN?
I WOULD DIE OF SHAME! MY BEARD WOULD NEVER GROW AGAIN!
SO IT WOULD BE ALL RIGHT FOR ME, BUT NOT FOR YOU?
AND HOW WOULD YOUR EGO SURVIVE IF THE GODS KNEW THAT YOU WOULD NOT UNDERTAKE THIS BRAVE FEAT YOURSELF, AND INSTEAD HAD ME, OR THE LOVELY FREYJA, TAKE THIS RISK FOR YOU?

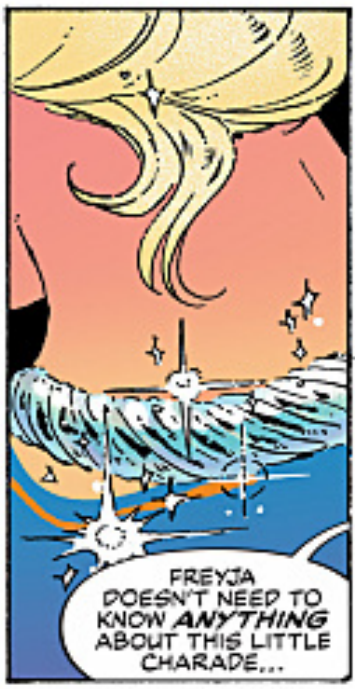

...THAT WOULD ALSO BE A SHAME.

THE BIGGEST SHAME OF ALL IS THAT YOU SEEM TO LACK CONFIDENCE IN YOUR VISAGE.
YES, YES, FREYJA IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF THE GODDESSES--

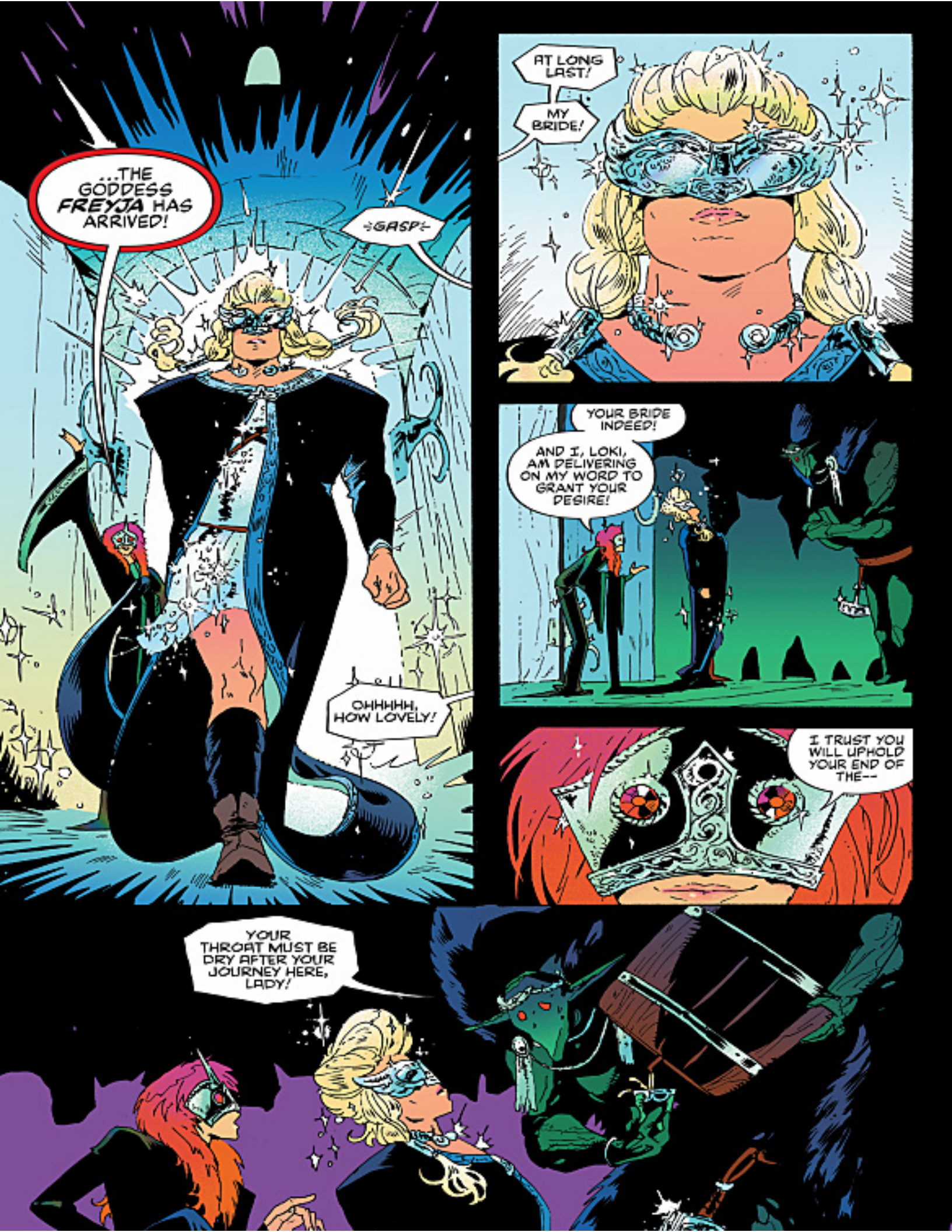
--BUT YOU ARE A PRIME SPECIMEN OF AESIR YOURSELF!
YOUR FEATURES HAVE A SIMILAR LUSTER--
SIMILAR LUSTER... hm.
BUT NOT THE SAME, AND I DO NOT POSSESS YOUR POWERS OF TRANSFORMATION.


NO NEED. HER LOOKS ARE ONLY A LEGEND TO THEM-- THEY'VE NEVER SEEN HER FACE.

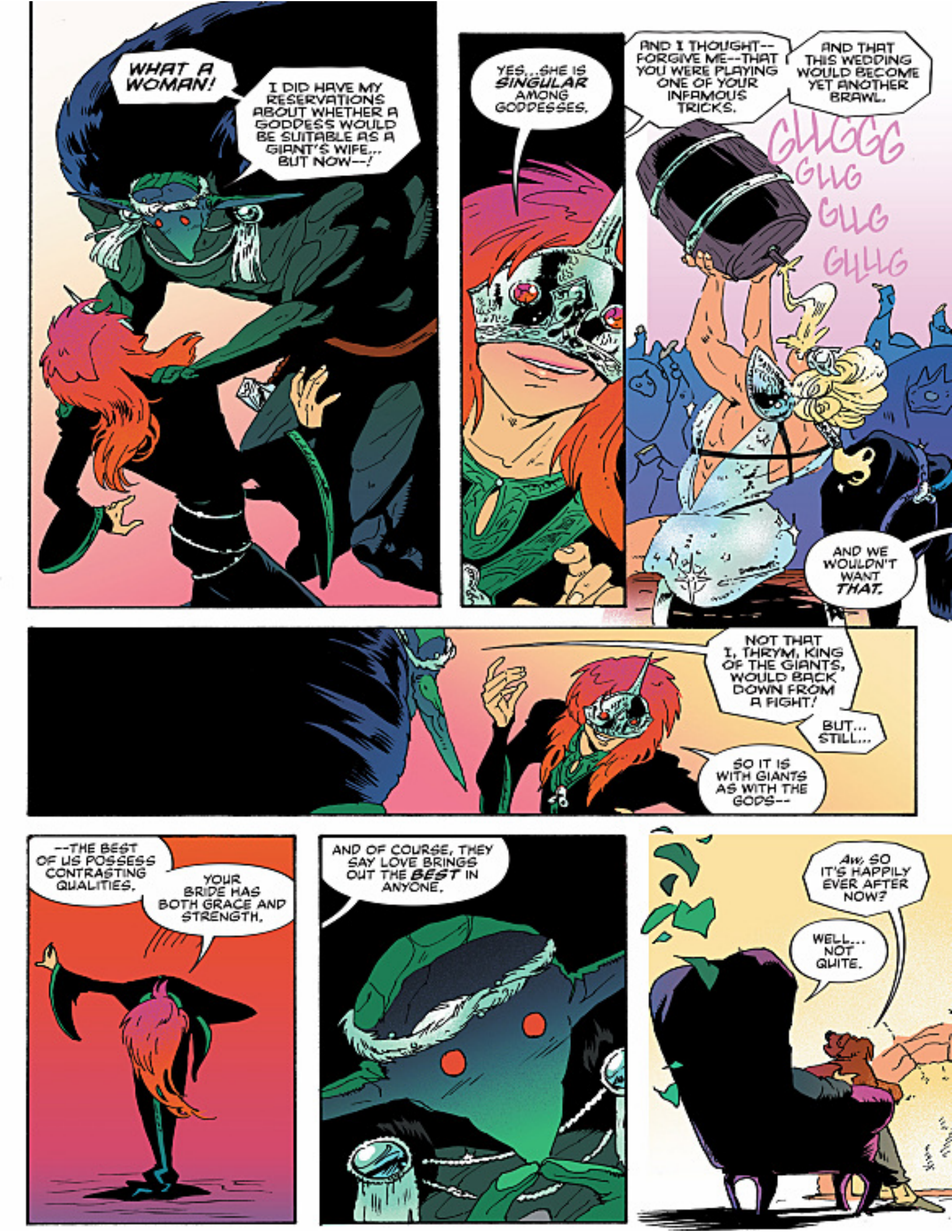

AND IF WE TOP YOUR BRIDAL TROUSSEAU WITH MY SECRET WEAPON...

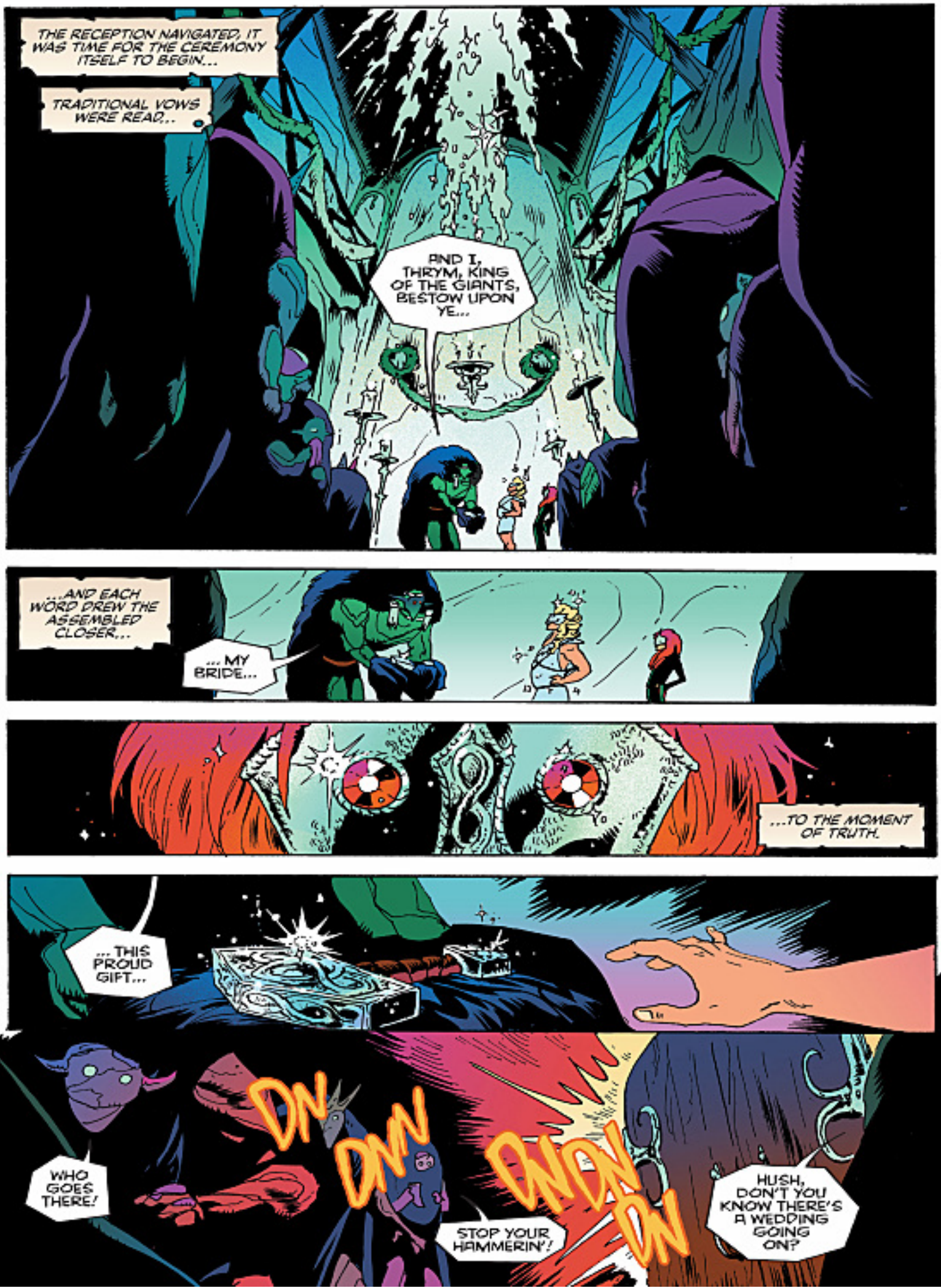

FREYJA DOESN'T NEED TO KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THIS LITTLE CHARADE...

THRYM DOES LOOK VERY KINGLY TODAY.
I FEAR THAT LOKI IS MAKING A FOOL OF HIM.
WHERE IS THIS LEGENDARY BEAUTY? AND HER AESIR GUESTS?
I ALWAYS CRY AT WEDDINGS!
LO!
THE LEGENDARY BEAUTY OF THE VANIR...
...THE JEWEL OF ASGARD...


...THE GODDESS FREYJA HAS ARRIVED!
GASP
OHHHHH, HOW LOVELY!
AT LONG LAST!
MY BRIDE!
YOUR BRIDE INDEED!
AND I, LOKI, AM DELIVERING ON MY WORD TO GRANT YOUR DESIRE!
I TRUST YOU WILL UPHOLD YOUR END OF THE--
YOUR THROAT MUST BE DRY AFTER YOUR JOURNEY HERE, LADY!

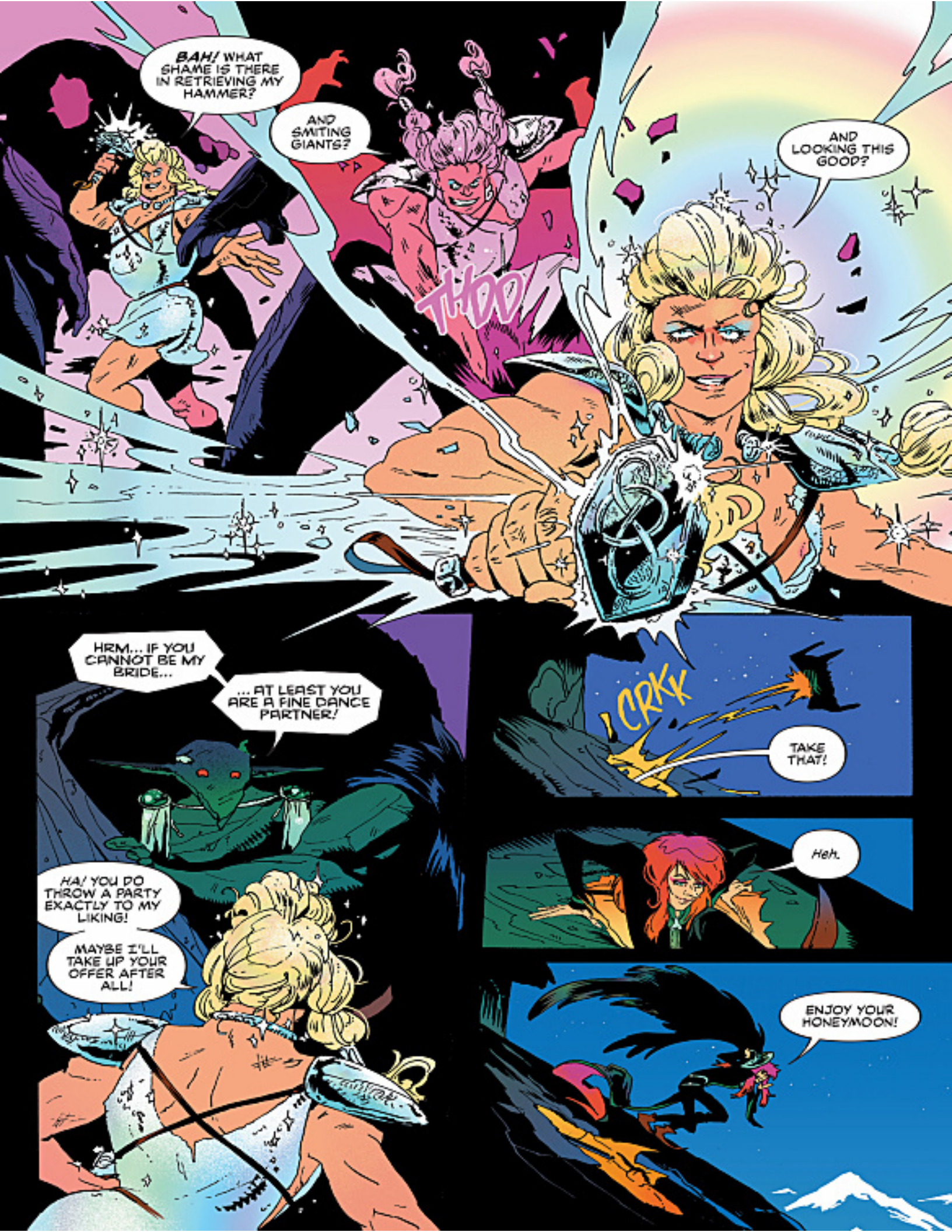
PARCHED!
ER--MY LADY HERE HAS BEEN SO EXCITED FOR THE WEDDING, SHE COULDN'T DRINK A DROP!
WH-WHAT A THIRST!
THEN, PERHAPS HAVE A BITE TO SUP AS WELL?
FAMISHED!
...NOR HAS SHE HAD A MORSEL OF FOOD!
D-DID OUR FEAST DISAGREE WITH YOUR, HRM...
... DELICATE CONSTITUTION?
UUURPP
...EXCUSE ME.
MY LORD...
MY LADY IS--


WHAT A WOMAN!
I DID HAVE MY RESERVATIONS ABOUT WHETHER A GODDESS WOULD BE SUITABLE AS A GIANT'S WIFE... BUT NOW--!
YES...SHE IS SINGULAR AMONG GODDESSES.
AND I THOUGHT-- FORGIVE ME--THAT YOU WERE PLAYING ONE OF YOUR INFAMOUS TRICKS.
AND THAT THIS WEDDING WOULD BECOME YET ANOTHER BRAWL.
GLLGGG GLLG GLLG GLLLG
AND WE WOULDN'T WANT THAT.
NOT THAT I, THRYM, KING OF THE GIANTS, WOULD BACK DOWN FROM A FIGHT!
BUT... STILL...
SO IT IS WITH GIANTS AS WITH THE GODS--
--THE BEST OF US POSSESS CONTRASTING QUALITIES.
YOUR BRIDE HAS BOTH GRACE AND STRENGTH.
AND OF COURSE, THEY SAY LOVE BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN ANYONE.
Aw, SO IT'S HAPPILY EVER AFTER NOW?
WELL... NOT QUITE.

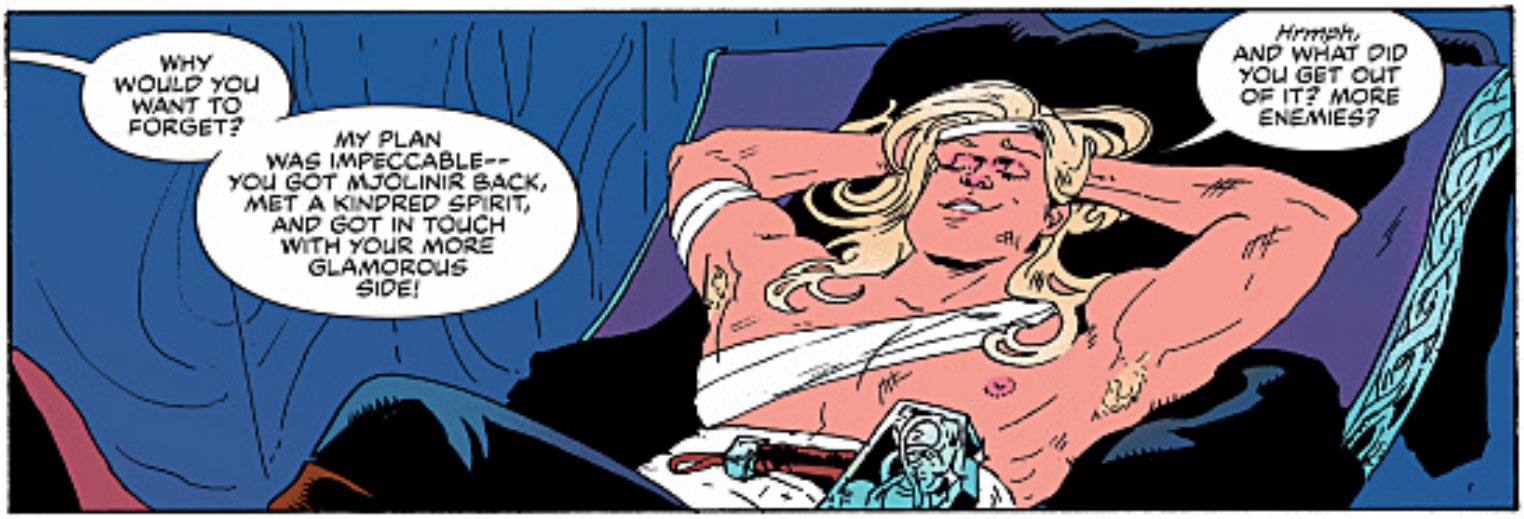

THE RECEPTION NAVIGATED, IT WAS TIME FOR THE CEREMONY ITSELF TO BEGIN...
TRADITIONAL VOWS WERE READ...
AND I, THRYM, KING OF THE GIANTS, BESTOW UPON YE...
...AND EACH WORD DREW THE ASSEMBLED CLOSER...
...MY BRIDE...
...TO THE MOMENT OF TRUTH.
...THIS PROUD GIFT...
WHO GOES THERE!
DN DNN
STOP YOUR HAMMERIN'!
DNDN DN
HUSH, DON'T YOU KNOW THERE'S A WEDDING GOING ON?

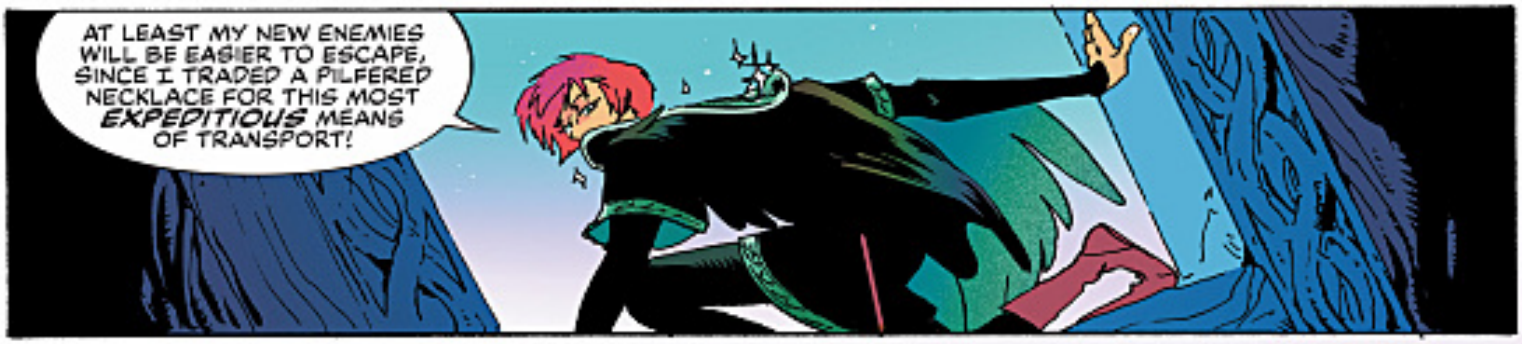
WHAT IN THE NINE WORLDS--!
WE'RE HERE TO SEE OUR DEAR THOR!
WE HEARD HE'D SUFFERED A TERRIBLE LOSS--
A WEDDING? YOU FORGOT TO INVITE US, SO WE INVITED OURSELVES!
IT IS A TRICK, MY WOULD-BE-BRIDEGROOM!
I AM NOT FREYJA, BUT THOR!
THANK YOU FOR KEEPING MY HAMMER WARM...
...IT IS READY FOR ME TO SWING!
HEY... HE DOESN'T LOOK A THING LIKE ME!
THWK
WAIT--
CRRK
THOR, WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH MY NECKLACE?

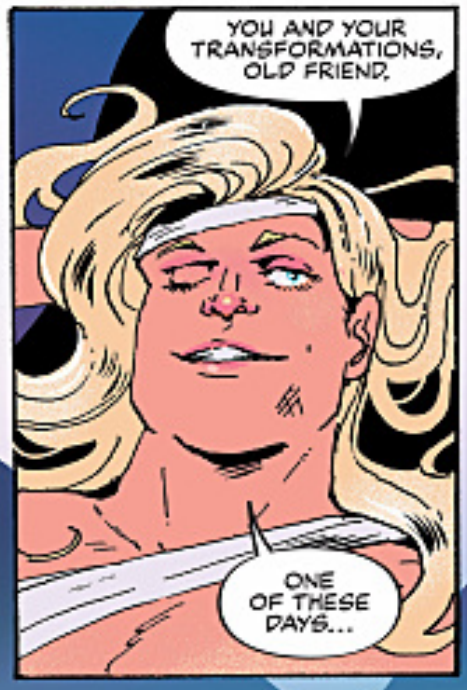
WHERE IS THAT SCOUNDREL? HE HAS BETRAYED ME!
ALAS, I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN NO GODDESS SO PERFECT COULD TRULY EXIST!
CRKKOOM
WHAT ABOUT THAT CRUDE IMPOSTER IS PERFECT?
THE AUDACITY!
W-WHICH ONE IS-- URK!
HONESTLY, I THOUGHT I WAS SEEING DOUBLE, TOO!
COULD I REALLY HAVE TWO SISTERS?
NOW, NOW, SURELY WE CAN ALL AGREE TO FIGHT THE GIANTS, NOT EACH OTHER...
I SAID I'D GRANT YOUR DESIRE, THRYM-- BUT I DIDN'T SAY WHICH ONE!
THE LOVE OF FIGHTING RUNS IN THE BLOOD OF BOTH GIANTS AND GODS ALIKE.
THOR, HAVE YOU NO SHAME?


BAH! WHAT SHAME IS THERE IN RETRIEVING MY HAMMER?
AND SMITING GIANTS?
THDD
AND LOOKING THIS GOOD?
HRM... IF YOU CANNOT BE MY BRIDE...
... AT LEAST YOU ARE A FINE DANCE PARTNER!
CRKK
TAKE THAT!
HA! YOU DO THROW A PARTY EXACTLY TO MY LIKING!
MAYBE I'LL TAKE UP YOUR OFFER AFTER ALL!
Heh.
ENJOY YOUR HONEYMOON!

Ah, WHAT A NIGHT!
WILL YOU REMEMBER *THIS* ONE?
HOW COULD I FORGET SUCH AN ESCAPADE!

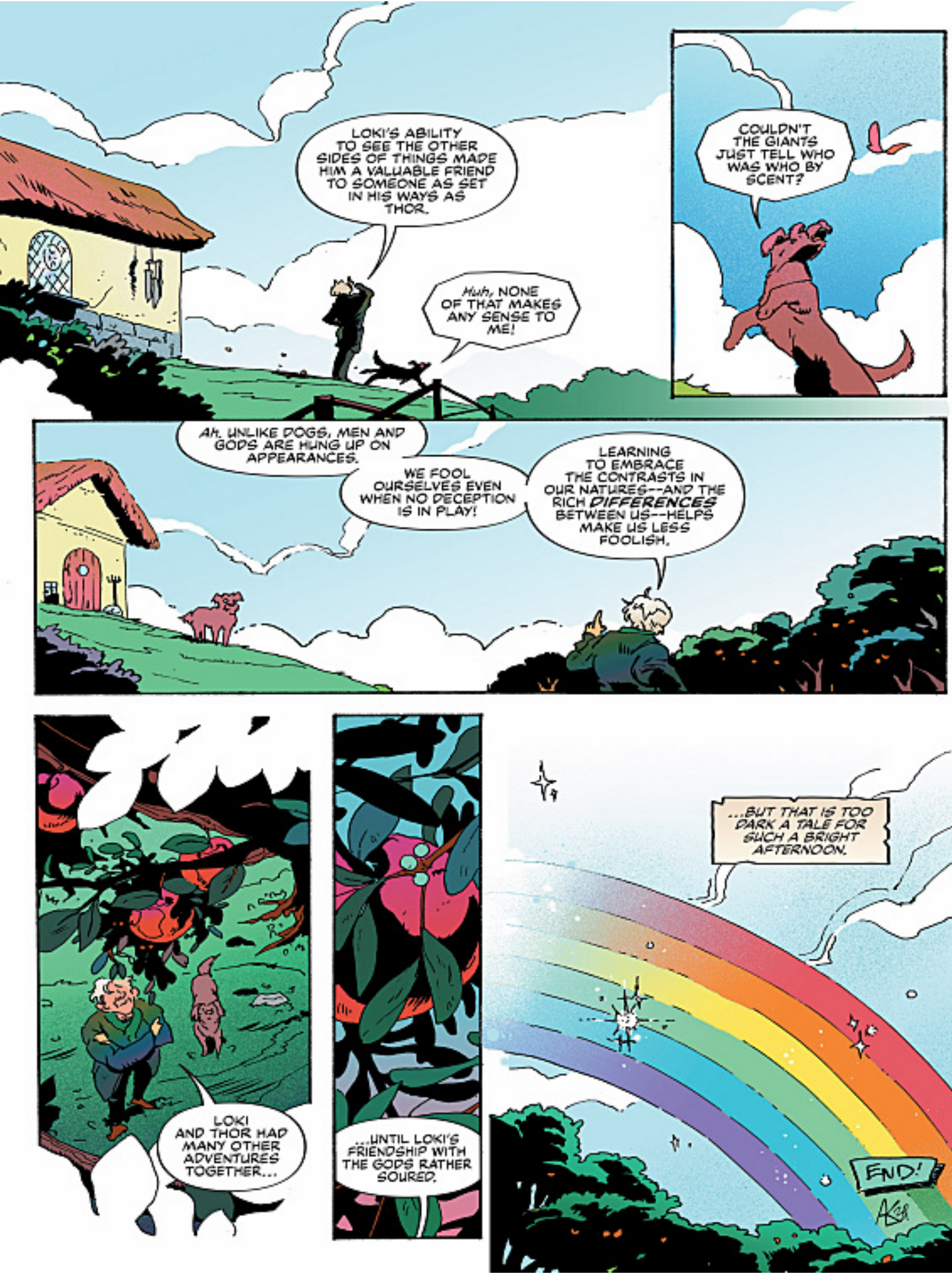

WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO FORGET?
MY PLAN WAS IMPECCABLE-- YOU GOT MJOLINIR BACK, MET A KINDRED SPIRIT, AND GOT IN TOUCH WITH YOUR MORE GLAMOROUS SIDE!
Hrmph, AND WHAT DID YOU GET OUT OF IT? MORE ENEMIES?


AT LEAST MY NEW ENEMIES WILL BE EASIER TO ESCAPE, SINCE I TRADED A PILFERED NECKLACE FOR THIS MOST ***EXPEDITIOUS*** MEANS OF TRANSPORT!


YOU AND YOUR TRANSFORMATIONS, OLD FRIEND.
ONE OF THESE DAYS...

...YOUR TRICKS WILL CATCH UP WITH YOU.
MAYBE SO...

...BUT UNTIL THEN, I'LL DO WHAT I PLEASE!


LOKI'S ABILITY TO SEE THE OTHER SIDES OF THINGS MADE HIM A VALUABLE FRIEND TO SOMEONE AS SET IN HIS WAYS AS THOR.
Huh, NONE OF THAT MAKES ANY SENSE TO ME!
COULDN'T THE GIANTS JUST TELL WHO WAS WHO BY SCENT?
AH. UNLIKE DOGS, MEN AND GODS ARE HUNG UP ON APPEARANCES.
WE FOOL OURSELVES EVEN WHEN NO DECEPTION IS IN PLAY!
LEARNING TO EMBRACE THE CONTRASTS IN OUR NATURES--AND THE RICH DIFFERENCES BETWEEN US--HELPS MAKE US LESS FOOLISH.
LOKI AND THOR HAD MANY OTHER ADVENTURES TOGETHER...
...UNTIL LOKI'S FRIENDSHIP WITH THE GODS RATHER SOURED.
...BUT THAT IS TOO DARK A TALE FOR SUCH A BRIGHT AFTERNOON.
END!

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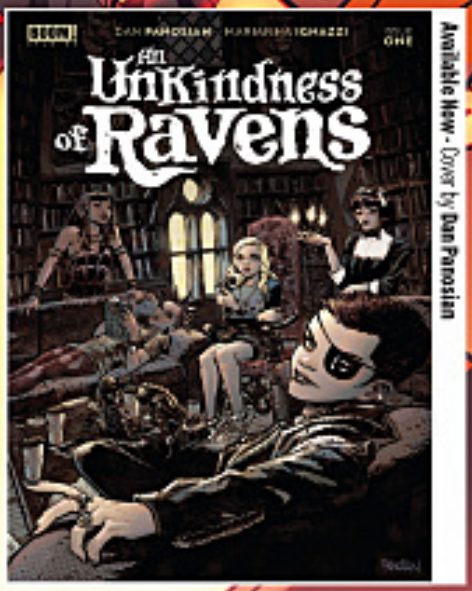

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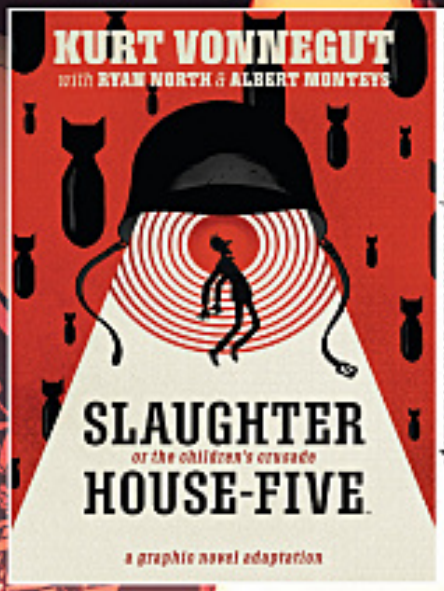

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